

THIS OLD LITHOGRAPH was published in Harper's Weekly of April 24, 1858. It is considered to be an artist's conception of General Albert Sidney Johnston's federal army on its way to Utah.

*Provo Herald 16 Feb 1967*

First of 3 Articles on the 'Utah Expedition'

# Why Was Johnston's Army Sent To Utah? Writer Offers Reasons

(Editor's note: The episode of Johnston's Army, known to non-Mormons as "The Mormon War," in 1857 and 1858 is one of the most controversial chapters in Utah history. Kathryn D. Groesbeck of Payson, who has written many excellent historical features for The Daily Herald, offers the reasons as she sees them and a general story of this chapter in the territory's history. Her article will be presented in three installments, the first of which follows.)

**KATHRYN D. GROESBECK** From the year 1857 to 1861, when Camp Floyd was evacuated, the entire history of Utah concerned with the Utah Expedition and the circumstances of the Utah War.

On the part of the United States government the record began with orders on May 28, 1857, for troops at Fort Leavenworth to march to Utah. Named head the expedition wasrevet-Brigadier General W. S. Harney. The entire force including civilian teamsters, wagon masters, and other employees and hangers-on totaled about 5,000 men. When it appeared that Harney was a little anxious "to put down the rebellion," he was replaced by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston.

## 'State of Rebellion'

The words accompanying the order for the march explained that the civil government of Utah Territory was in a state of rebellion against the laws and authority of the United States. This idea was the conclusion of the Buchanan administration reached after three letters had been sent to President Buchanan by a former mail contractor, W. M. F. Magraw; an appointed Associate Justice of the Utah Supreme Court, W. V. Drummond; and Thomas S. Bliss, Indian Agent on the Upper Platte.

Though the administration admitted that no investigation had been made of the charges expressed in the three letters and

were such, he added, that "bloodshed, robbery, and rapine" will reduce the country to a "howling wilderness." Magraw, it might be noted, later became one of the chief subcontractors in supplying the Utah Expedition.

## Claims of Letter

The letter from Indian Agent Twiss complained that the stations established by the Brigham Young Company in Nebraska Territory were upsetting the Indian relations on the Plains and that the Mormons were trying to monopolize all trade with the Indians.

Judge Drummond's letter of resignation and the charges he listed against the Mormons capped the climax to bring about what became known as "Buchanan's blunder." Drummond said no law of Congress was ever considered by the Mormons as binding as they looked to Brigham Young and to him alone for the laws by which they are to be governed. He accused the male members of the church of resisting all laws of the country with some of the men set apart by special order of Brigham Young to

take both the lives and property of persons who questioned the authority of the church. Insults, Drummond said, were heaped upon Federal officers, insults most vulgar and loathesome.

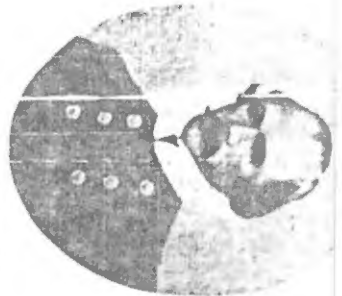
## Accusation Made

Drummond accused Brigham Young of sending to the penitentiary five or six young men from Missouri and Iowa, who had violated no criminal law. They were just non-Mormons. Drummond said he had come to the conclusion, sickening as it was, that Captain John W. Gunnison and his party of eight were murdered by Indians in 1853 under the order and direction of the Mormons. A. W. Babbitt, late secretary of the Territory, was murdered, wrote Drummond, on the Plains, not by Indians, as the Mormons said, but by a band of Mormons under special order by Brigham Young. Records, papers, etc., of the Supreme Court, Drummond charged, had been destroyed by order of the church. A treasonable and disgraceful state of affairs existed in Utah Territory according to Drummond.

Though Curtis E. Bolton in refuting in June 1857 all that Drummond had stated in his letter, it appears that lack of harmony between Utah and the nation grew with the re-appointment by President Pierce of Brigham Young as governor. Howard Stansbury, John W. Gunnison, and Thomas L. Kane, well-known figures in the country, had endorsed Brigham Young and probably did more service for the Mormon Community than any other men in America. Brigham Young would never have instigated any order against Gunnison.

The truth is that Utah was not in rebellion when the expedition was projected. The Mormons were simply seeking to build up their Kingdom of God on earth. That was their offense, as it had been in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.

(To Be Continued)



Pioneer Peace in Jeopardy 1857

passing Fort Bridger the Major separated from his command and returned to that post upon important business. Coming unexpectedly upon a body of United States troops—for the infantry were again on the march—he and his adjutant, William Stowell, were surrounded and captured. Taylor escaped and rejoined his comrades, but Stowell remained a prisoner until peace was proclaimed.

**More Guerilla Tactics.** Other commands were also scouring the country along the route of the advancing column, annoying the men every hour by threatened or actual raids. If they did not succeed in dispiriting the troops, it was because the American soldier is hard to discourage. One cause of discomfiture was the absence of the army cavalry, which was still far in the rear. The Utah rangers were well mounted, and had their own way with the infantry.

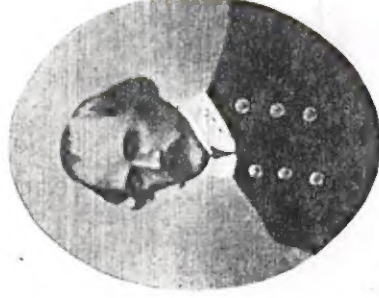
**An Attempted Detour.** Finding the direct route to Salt Lake Valley blocked against him, Colonel Alexander attempted a detour northward toward Soda Springs; but the nimble rangers still hung upon his flanks, keeping up their tantalizing Cossack warfare. At length the Colonel called a halt and convened a council of his officers. Some were in favor of forcing their way through Echo Canyon, regardless of consequences; but cooler counsels prevailed. To proceed farther was deemed imprudent, and matters came to a standstill.

**Colonel Alexander and Governor Young.** Colonel Alexander now wrote to Governor Young, complain-

ing of the hostile reception given the United States troops on the threshold of the Territory, and of the unfair methods by which his advance was being opposed. He also intimated that the Governor had been guilty of tampering with the mails, "intercepting public and private letters." The Governor answered, denying that he had intercepted any letters, and reminding the Colonel that the Government itself was responsible for the stopping of the mails. He justified the mode of warfare by which the citizens were defending their homes, and commanded the troops to leave the Territory, offering to assist them to reach Fort Hall or to retire within reach of supplies from the East. In conclusion the Governor invited the Colonel and his officers to visit Salt Lake City, without troops, promising them a safe escort to and from the town, with courteous treatment during their stay.

#### General Johnston Arrives.

It was not until the first week in November that General Johnston joined Colonel Alexander on Black's Fork. Johnston was a great commander and soon infused new life and energy into the baffled and half dispirited troops. Spurning the idea of departing a single point from the direct route through the mountains, he at once ordered a forward movement to Fort Bridger.



GENERAL A. S. JOHNSTON.

See whole  
Book on This  
War